

THE "ARABIAN NIGHTS"

For many years I have made a long series of visits to Morocco as medical adviser King Hassan II, his family and court. In March, 1975, the King's physician, acquainted with publications from our laboratory, had advised him to call upon me. His Majesty thereupon summoned the American ambassador and demanded that he produce this physician at the court within three days. The latter, then President of the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences--but already destined to become the eleventh director of the National Institutes of Health--yielded to the prayers of the Duty officer of the North African desk at State, and agreed to meet the deadline. Since then, I have become privy to many intimate details of the court. Perhaps my most important contribution has been to introduce the best specialists and consultants in the United States into an exclusively French retinue which attended the King before I came to consult.

My myriad, sometimes incredible experiences in the court, the deep friendship I have with a remarkable man, one of a dwindling few to play the role of an absolute monarch, and my strong attachments to a land and its people, with their singular admirable qualities, have been a remarkable adventure, counterpoised against the rest of my career. Experiences have been recorded in notes scrawled on hotel stationery, notebooks from Swiss stationers and many other repositories. These constitute a record, not yet edited or even re-read, and still accumulating. Someday, perhaps I will be able to extract the flavor of them for publication. Alas, their most precious substance, the medical information contained here, must remain privileged, closed away in the diary's dozen-and-a-half leather binders with their exquisite design, made for me in Fez.

Some of the most pleasurable times have occurred after I was made a member of the Académie du Royaume du Maroc founded by the King. In addition to its 30 members among the Moroccan intelligentsia, there are 30 associated (foreign) members, among whom there have been a few Americans, beginning with Henry Kissinger and Neil Armstrong. Seances are held semi-annually, during which members of the Académie française, the House of Lords, imams from Tunisia, retired presidents, justices, generals and professors exchange discourse, usually in Arabic or French--with English translation. One result is that I now nightly read an hour of French for relaxation.


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